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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000793

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: MANUEL CONFIRMATION AS PM HINGES ON LESPWA-PREVAL
DETENTE AND A MORE ENGAGED PRESIDENT

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 701

[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 764

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: President Preval on May 29 convoked a special session of Parliament, primarily to consider Robert Manuel's candidacy for the office of Prime Minister. Manuel himself has been reaching out to parliamentarians, political party leadership and civil society leaders. He is hopeful, but not overly confident, about his chances for ratification. Preval's (and Manuel's) ostensible political party, Lespwa, poses a threat to Manuel's ratification. By refusing thus far to meet directly with Lespwa senators and deputies, Preval has miffed the parliamentarians. Caretaker Prime Minister Alexis, on the other hand, has been cultivating his relationship with Lespwa, thus complicating the political maneuvering underway. Among the other major political parties, Fusion and OPL are on board with Manuel's nomination, while Fanmi Lavalas is undecided. Regardless, Lespwa has the votes to outnumber them in the Chamber of Deputies. The President's approach to his party and his outreach to Parliament in the next few days will prove critical to Manuel's candidacy. Absent a more engaged President, prospects for Manuel's candidacy appear very uncertain at this point. End summary.

Commission, and Opinions, Forming in Parliament

[1](#)2. (C) Both houses of Parliament formed committees May 29 to consider the candidacy of Robert Manuel for Prime Minister. In accordance with the formal process, the seven-member commission in the Chamber of Deputies requested May 29 that the President of the Chamber ask Manuel to present his documents. However, the commission does not intend to begin examining Manuel's qualifications until the week of June 2, according to Chief of Staff for Legislative Affairs Pierre Jelaime. The parliament will vote first to ratify Preval's choice, and then, if Manuel succeeds, on his general platform.

Senate President Concerned about Preval's Hands Off Approach

13. (C) Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespwa, North) told the Ambassador May 30 that he was on his way to a meeting with Preval to encourage the President to talk with Lespwa senators and deputies. Preval had already refused twice and remains above the fray, telling Bastien that he (Bastien) needs to lead the way. According to the Senate president, the only way Robert Manuel can successfully pass through the Parliament ratification process is if Preval lobbies Lespwa members on his behalf; otherwise, the President's own party will vote against the nomination, effectively sinking Manuel's candidacy. Bastien said he had spoken to Manuel about the situation, and asked Manuel if Preval had agreed to talk to Lespwa. From that conversation, Bastien assumed Manuel had gotten some sort of assurance from Preval that he would lean on the parliamentarians. In the meantime, we understand, Manuel himself is courting the Lespwa leadership.

14. (C) Bastien was concerned about the current situation, predicting that even if ratified, Manuel will face a difficult challenge securing the confirmation of his government. He could already point to instances of attempted 'blackmail' (his term), with certain senators demanding favors for their departments or posts in the new government. He worried the country was trending toward a standstill. Bastien said PM Alexis is not helping the situation, although he could not attest to Alexis directly preventing a detente between Lespwa and Preval. Bastien said he had urged Alexis to play a positive role in the selection process, but remained unconvinced Alexis would follow this advice.

Deputies React

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15. (C) Deputy Sorel Francois (Fanmi Lavalas, Port-au-Prince/West) informed Poloff May 30 that the majority of Deputies remained disenchanted with Preval's nomination of Manuel for Prime Minister. He claimed the Deputies were not concerned with Manuel's capabilities to lead a new government but felt insulted by Preval's 'mercenary' tactics in nominating candidates for the prime minister position with no consultation or input from the Deputies. Deputies Oglie Pierre (MOCHRENA, Camp Perrin/South) and Jean Marcel Lumerant (Alyans, Grand-Goave/West) echoed these same sentiments to Poloff on May 30. They claimed that Preval's presentation of one candidate for the position as opposed to several was indicative of Preval's continuous refusal to cooperate with the Deputies despite the Deputies refusal to ratify Preval's first choice for Prime Minister, Ericq Pierre (ref A).

16. (C) Deputy Francois also informed Poloff that the Deputies in session on May 29 raised Article 157 as a possible impediment to Manuel's nomination as Prime Minister. Article 157, Clause 5 of the Haitian Constitution requires any person appointed Prime Minister to have resided in Haiti for five consecutive years. According to Deputy Francois, the Deputies claimed that Manuel left Haiti in 1999 and returned at the end of 2005, a period of only two consecutive years in Haiti.

Political Parties Divided

17. (C) Although political parties have little control over their colleagues in parliament, Lespwa Steering Committee member Anes Lubin told Poloff that he does not believe Lespwa parliamentarians will vote in favor of Manuel. They remain, he said, unhappy with Preval's treatment and insulted that he failed to inform them of his choice prior to making it public on May 24. He claimed the Lespwa Deputies found out about Manuel's nomination over the radio.

18. (C) OPL (Struggling People's Party) President Edgard

Leblanc told us that OPL will support Manuel's ratification if the committees find him to meet the Constitutional criteria for the Prime Minister post, a view echoed by OPL Senator Andris Riche (Grand'Anse) and Deputy Ackloush Louis-Jeune (Dame Marie/Grand'Anse). In a May 27 meeting with OPL, Manuel said he was optimistic about his ratification process and was working hard to gather support among parliamentarians. Leblanc explained that Manuel is in a difficult position with Lespwa, having for the most part withdrawn from the party along with Preval at the outset of Preval's term. In the void, PM Alexis took a stronger role in the leadership of the party. Leblanc noted that the Lespwa parliamentarians, now mostly following Alexis' lead, remain unpredictable. For example, he said, Preval was confident his first nominee, Ericq Pierre, would pass, but Lespwa (under the guise of the Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians, or CPP) turned against him at the last minute.

¶9. (C) Manuel met with Fusion party leadership and parliamentarians on May 28. Fusion spokesperson Micha Gaillard told us that the 15 Fusion members of Parliament will vote as a group in support of Manuel's ratification. However, Fusion will examine carefully Manuel's selection of a Cabinet and his general platform) which must be strong in the areas of agriculture, food security and job creation. Fusion is confident Manuel is well equipped to manage Haiti's security troubles, and is also intelligent enough to accept advice from others in the areas he knows less well. Gaillard referred to the CPP as ''Lespwa plus some,'' and said they were under PM Alexis' control in the absence of any engagement on the part of Preval.

¶10. (C) Former Deputy and Fanmi Lavalas (FL) senatorial candidate for the South Department Francky Exeus informed Poloff May 30 that Manuel had sought support from both the higher ranks of FL and the party's grassroots. FL has no official position on the candidacy but privately are not enthusiastic about Manuel. They expected Preval to nominate Minister of Planning Jean Max Bellerive. Exeus claimed

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public sentiment in the South Department, where the April riots originated (and a location of much of the drug dealing that Manuel has worked to halt) is opposed to Manuel's nomination.

Manuel Remains Upbeat

¶11. (C) With the politicking on-going, Manuel remains upbeat, although realistic about his chances. Speaking with the Ambassador May 29, the candidate was in good spirits. He remarked that his strength in the security arena as a boon to his candidacy in the current security climate (a comment borne out by business leaders, many of whom oppose Preval but who like Manuel's ''law and order'' reputation.) Manuel ticked off a number of his priorities, if confirmed, beginning with ''a real war on crime and drugs and making criminals fear the government.'' He said that he has been ''working the phones,'' meeting with parliamentarians and party leaders from the major political parties. However, he takes nothing for granted and expressed concern that Preval was not talking to these same groups to champion his nominee. Enconced in the Montana Hotel, Manuel has brought his colleague, Martine Deverson, from the President's staff join him in organizing his work. Mindful of his own inexperience in pocketbook issues, he has told intimates that, if confirmed, he wants to bring a strong, highly competent economic team into office and has indicated privately he will likely keep MinFinance Dorsainvil.

Comment

¶12. (C) Since his election, Preval has distanced himself

deliberately from Leswpa, arguing that as president, he is above all politics. He deliberately left it to PM Alexis to cultivate the party and build a reservoir of support and common political interests. That neglect has now come back to haunt Preval. Clearly ambivalent about the situation, he reportedly told the visiting Brazilian president earlier this week that he didn't know if Bob Manuel would win the vote. He added, our Brazilian colleagues report, that he could do little to help him. Given Preval's aversion to lobbying Parliament - and his resistance to pressure of any kind - prospects for Manuel's confirmation at this time appear uncertain at best.

SANDERSON